

CONCLUSION

After analysing the socio-economic situation of the 3 blocks, I wish to offer the following conclusion about farm life there.

The sex-ratio of the population is none too satisfactory. Males and females almost equal each other in number. This would not be conducive to labour efficiency in padi farming, an operation which needs physical labour. Where agriculture is shared the men often have to do the heavier work of breaking up the soil,¹ while the women come in later to tend and weed the plants.¹ This problem is further aggravated by the fact that even in the potential labour force (in the less than 10 years age bracket there are 285 males and 318 females) there are more females than males.

Secondly the problem of dependency is quite acute, bearing in mind that padi farming is the least lucrative of all agricultural operations. Padi farming is characterized by small farms, high rents, low yields and much indebtedness as well as price exploitation by traders. The income of many padi farmer is nearer \$50/- a month than \$100/-.² We have seen that only 52% of the population is economically active, thus leaving a total of dependency of 48%. It would mean that approximately half the population depends for their livelihood on the other half. At first look this would not present a problem. But since in the economically active group about half are females, their overall productivity is decreased. It should be reminded that females in most cases are part-time farmers, the rest of their time being devoted to housework. Young children offer a helping hand in the farming activities but their productivity is negligible. With low incomes and low productivity, the problem of dependency is rather serious. It would be more so for growing children who consume more food.

Associated with the dependency problem is the question of unemployment. But this is not a serious problem since only a small proportion of those above 15 years are unemployed. There seems to be no age limit for padi farming in this area. Ask an old man of 60 what his occupation is and he would tell you he is a padi farmer. In the case of younger children, especially among the girls they but merely help on the farm, and even that is only part-time e.g. harvesting and weeding.

¹Raymond Firth: "Human Types" page 99.

²Ungku A. Aziz: Facts and Fallacies about the Malay Economy - In Retrospect, with New Footnotes - Ekonomi, Vol. III, No. I, page 12.

In such a padi farming community everybody's contribution is valuable, however small the contribution may be.

Thirdly the average size of the farm family is large (6 persons per family), considering the fact that the average size of a farm is small (3.2 acres). As padi farming is not too lucrative, and there are many mouths to be fed, the situation of poverty is a major problem. They need more income to develop their farms. They need more income to improve their diet so that they can work harder. They need more income to give their children a better education and to live a fuller cultural life. But poverty is a vicious circle. The farmers have no resources to earn more.

This brings us to the question of land-ownership and operation. Of the total 180 farms, more than 45 are tenant farms (taking into account only those farmers who have absolutely no holdings in the 3 blocks). With tenancy, rents have to be paid either in cash or land. Landlords nowadays demand rent in cash which actually means an increase in rent.³ Another percentage of the crops will have to be set aside for "zakat." What is left of the crop the family has to survive on for 12 months of a year. Another problem posed by tenancy is insecurity. Tenants do not know when they will be asked to leave the land and as a result they refrain from making improvements on their land.

From this Exercise it is hoped that problems faced by the padi farmers have been clearly presented. Remedies of such problems have been suggested by remarkable authorities and in fact some have been carried out.

Improvements in rice production have been largely the responsibility of the Drainage and Irrigation Department - a major factor in post-war expansion in output to about 25% above pre-war levels. There is the possibility of increasing fields through irrigation and more active extension work; improving varieties and techniques of cultivation including more widespread use of fertilizers, expanding the area of double cropping and the development of new lands for rice production. All these have been suggested by the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development. But the Bank itself found the weaknesses in these suggestions. Expansion of rice land is only possible at the cost of neglecting other fields of the public sector in the economy.⁴

³International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, 1955, page 318.

⁴Economic Development of Malaya, IBRD, 1955, page 59.

Security of tenancy has been one of the aims of the government. Laws governing tenancy have been formulated but not implemented. Land laws have also been formulated for holdings, so that sub-division would not occur. The system of "Zakat" (religious law) has been severely criticised by the Minister of Agriculture and Co-operatives on the basis that landlords do not have to contribute to it because they did not plant the padi, while the tenant farmers have to bear the burden.

With these suggested changes, it is hoped that the padi farmer would be able to enjoy a higher level of living.

APPENDIX A

Extract from Technical Reports: Agricultural Development,
IBRD Mission 1955 - The Economic Development of Malaya,
pp. 252 - 253.

Padi (Oryza sativa L)

" we noted the emphasis placed on increased rice production in governmental agricultural policy " indicated our view that in the further planning of agricultural development greater consideration should be given to the relative advantages of other crops in comparison with rice; recommended that new land development for rice and other crops be given increasing emphasis; and emphasized that we have in mind a broadened and expanded programme of agricultural development rather than a curtailment of attention to increase rice production. As we have pointed out, further expansion of rice production in both existing and new areas is bound to be of high priority in any soundly conceived programme of agricultural development.

With Malaya's potentialities for further expansion in padi acreage and for increased yields per acre, there seems every reason to expect that the long-term upward trend in rice production can be maintained in the foreseeable future. But to do this, governmental measures to foster additional rice production will continue to be at least as necessary as in the past.

Other governmental measures to improve and extend padi production have included breeding, selection and distribution of improved seed; experimentation and development of improved techniques for sowing, cultivation, and disease and pest control; testing and subsidized distribution of fertilizers; investigation of mechanical cultivation possibilities for padi; and provision of mechanical cultivation services to padi growers on a small scale through RIDA.

APPENDIX B

LAND AND MATTERS PERTAINING THERETO:

1. MALAY RESERVATIONS

Malays* in the Federation are protected in the possession of their land by State and Settlement legislation which designates large areas as reservations or areas under customary tenure, and which prohibits the transfer, change or lease to a non-Malay of any land held by a Malay within these areas. No land within these reservations may be alienated to non-Malays. The purpose is to protect Malay land-ownership, rather than to exclude non-Malays from the reservations.

*A Malay is defined in the Malay Reservation Enactment as "a person belonging to any Malayan race who habitually speaks the Malay language, or any Malayan Language, and who professes the Muslim religion." Immigrants from Indonesia come within this definition.

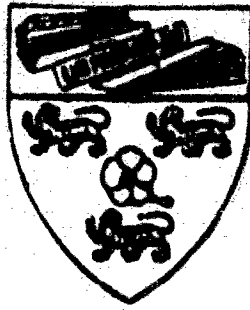
2. SUBDIVISION AND FRAGMENTATION

Extracts from Prof. U. Aziz: "Concepts of Agglomeration and Consolidation and Related Research Methodology" - Ekonomi: Vol. I, No. I, 1960, p. 17.

A piece of land can be divided or subdivided if the first owner wishes to transfer it or if the new owners wish to partition the piece of land between them. Subdivision is the process whereby pieces of land become smaller and smaller through time.

A farmer may have all his land in one piece, or he may have it in several pieces. If the several pieces are so far from one another or so scattered about the village that the efficiency of the farm is lowered, then these pieces are in a state of fragmentation.

Whereas subdivision is the physical division of single pieces into several pieces, the existence of fragmentation depends more on economic considerations (i.e. net returns) than on the physical distribution of the several pieces.



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